

REMARKS

In the Office Action the Examiner noted that claims 6-9 and 21-24 were pending in the application and the Examiner rejected all claims. By this Amendment, various claims have been amended and new claims 25 and 26 have been added. Thus, claims 6-9 and 21-26 are pending in the application. The Examiner's rejections are traversed below.

The Rejection

In item 2 on pages 2-10 of the Office Action the Examiner rejected claims 6-9 and 21-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,435,544 to Mandel in combination with U.S. Patent 5,977,954 to Arimoto et al.

The Prior Art

U.S. Patent 5,435,544 to Mandel

The Mandel patent is directed to an electronic printer and multibin mailbox system for an electronically networked system of plural users of an electronic printer. In this system, the individual user's print jobs are automatically variably directed into particular electronically assigned print job storage bins of the multibin mailbox system (see Abstract).

The features relied on by the Examiner in making the rejection are best illustrated by Figure 18 which shows a mailbox unit in which print jobs are separated into mailboxes. A variable display indicates the bins into which the particular user's jobs have been placed last and not yet removed (column 16, lines 53-65). Figure 18 also illustrates several hoppers for input paper to be used in the printing jobs.

In columns 19 and 20 of Mandel, there is description of prior art systems including systems wherein a plurality of work stations interact with a print service to have documents printed. In particular, remote work stations, PC terminals and facsimiles are connected for shared use of an electronic printer via a print server and/or a shared user interface formatting printing service. On page 4 of the Office Action the Examiner acknowledges that Mandel "does not teach a step of assigning a sheet input (or a paper feed inlet) by the printing apparatus for each operating relationship." However, the Examiner takes the position that this feature is taught by the Arimoto patent.

U.S. Patent 5,977,954 to Arimoto et al.

The Arimoto et al. patent is directed to an image processing system which comprises a printer and a reader which are mechanically and functionally separated so that they can be used independently of each other. The Examiner, on page 4 of the Office Action, takes the position that Figures 1A and 1B "teaches a step of assigning a paper feed inlet at the printing apparatus... for each operating relationship."

The Present Claimed Invention Patentably Distinguishes Over The Prior Art

The claims have been amended in an effort to clarify the differences between the prior art and the present claimed invention. Specifically, in the present claimed invention, a plurality of logical printers are operated in parallel, while in the systems disclosed in the cited references, the systems perform a single job only.

While it is true that the Arimoto et al. patent discloses paper feed cassettes 915, it is submitted that Arimoto et al. does not operate in a way which is similar to the present claimed invention. The Examiner points out column 6, lines 44-49 which describe whether an upper or lower cassette stage is selected in order to optimize the copy which is obtained. This is similar to standard copier equipment which recognizes the size of paper and selects the appropriate paper tray based on the appropriate size.

Referring to claim 6, it is submitted that none of the prior art teaches or suggests:

establishing relevant operating relationships selected from the plurality of operating relationships with the print requesting device;

specifying a paper feed inlet and a paper discharge outlet for each of the operating relationships, respectively, and storing specified paper feed inlets and paper discharge outlets in a table; and

assigning a paper feed inlet and a paper discharge outlet for each of the established operating relationships based on the contents stored in the table.

Therefore, it is submitted that claim 6 patentably distinguishes over the prior art.

Claims 7-9 depend from claim 6 and include all of the features of that claim, plus additional features which are not taught or suggested by the prior art. Therefore, it is submitted that claims 7-9 also patentably distinguish over the prior art.

Referring to claim 21, it is submitted that the prior art does not teach or suggest:

establishing more than one operating relationship with a plurality of devices in parallel, wherein each relationship is established independently with each of the respective devices; and

assigning a feed inlet and a discharge outlet specified in advance for each operating relationship.

Therefore, it is submitted that claim 21, patentably distinguishes over the prior art.

Claims 22-24 depend from claim 21 and include all of the features of that claim, plus additional features which are not taught or suggested by the prior art. Therefore, it is submitted that these claims also patentably distinguish over the prior art.

In addition, it is submitted that the Examiner's line of reasoning for combining the features of Arimoto et al. and Mandel is defective. On page 11 of the Office Action the Examiner states:

The suggestion for modifying the printer of Mandel can be reasoned by one of ordinary skill in the art as set forth above by Arimoto because the modified printer of Mandel would increase the efficiency for controlling the paper feed inlets by assigning one of the paper feed inlets for the desired paper of each print job sent from each user.

The Examiner's statement does not provide any support for his position that the reasoning (i.e., because the modified printer of Mandel would have increased efficiency) comes from the prior art.

In order to make out a prima facie case of obviousness, the Examiner must provide a line of reasoning as to why the teachings of the prior art would have been combined. However, this line of reasoning must come from the prior art and not from the applicant's specification. It is submitted that the Examiner has supplied a line of reasoning which is not from the prior art but

was created by the Examiner in order to produce a reason why a modification of Mandel would produce a better printer. Therefore, it is submitted that the Examiner's rejection is improper.

New Claims 25 and 26

New claim 25 depends from claim 6 and includes all of the features of that claim plus additional features which are not taught or suggested by the prior art. Therefore, it is submitted that claim 25 patentably distinguishes over the prior art.

New claim 26 is directed to a printing apparatus which includes:

a printer controller to establish more than one operating relationship with a plurality of devices in parallel, wherein each operating relationship is established independently with each of the respective devices, and to print in accordance with a print request from the plurality of devices by using a feed inlet and a discharge outlet specified in advance for each operating relationship.

Therefore, it is submitted that claim 26 patentably distinguishes over the prior art.

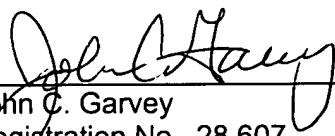
Summary

It is submitted that none of the references, either taken alone or in combination teach the present claimed invention. Thus, claims 6-9 and 21-26 are deemed to be a condition suitable for allowance. Reconsideration of the claims and an early notice of allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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